

A  
LETTER  
TO

*Sir Richard Blackmore;*

Occasioned by his Book, intituled,

*Modern Arians Unmask'd.*

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*By THOMAS MORGAN.*

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LO N D O N :

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# LETTER

TO

## *Sir Richard Blackmore.*

SIR,

**I** Cannot express to you the different Passions with which I was affected, upon reading your Book, intituled, *Modern Arians Unmask'd*, &c. With great Resolution, and some Pains, I have dispossess'd my self of all those Sentiments which may not be so proper to be mixed with a Controversy; especially while I am concern'd with a Gentleman, who must in Justice be considered as a Person of Learning, Probity and Honour: But

A 2 still,

still, I cannot cease to wonder, when I compare the Book with the Character of the Author ; for 'tis really in it self surprizing, that a learned and good Man should think to serve the Cause of true Religion, by substituting only *warm Dernortations*, *wrong Impeachments* and *in deliberate Charges*, in the Place and Room of rational *objective Evidence*. I shall here therefore take the Liberty to lay before you the Reasons I have to conclude, that amidst all this passionate Harangue, and poe- tick Fury, you have offered no good Argument or Reason at all ; but on the contrary, have, in all respects, imitated the Popish Advocates in their Method of making *Profelites*, and establishing Peo- ple in the *Faith* ; excepting only the *special Favour* of not giving up your Adver- saries to the Civil *Coercive Power* ; for which Piece of *natural Justice*, in the Name of all those who are so unhappy as to be reputed unorthodox, I heartily thank you.

You begin, by declaring the vast Im- portance of the present Case, as it stands in your Apprehensions, and endeavour to shew that it must be utterly unjustifiable, on the Principles of either Side, for the contending Parties in this Controversy to maintain Christian Communion with each other, p. 3, 4, 5.

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“ A great Number of Men among us,  
“ which is very surprizing, speak of the  
“ Controversy between the Believers of  
“ Christ’s Deity and their Adversaries, as  
“ a Matter of no great Concernment. It  
“ is only, say they, a Difference of Opin-  
“ ion about a Subject that is difficult  
“ to be understood ; that there are Men  
“ of Learning and Probity on either Side  
“ of the Question ; and therefore they  
“ conclude, that such Men should live  
“ peaceably together, and maintain Cha-  
“ rity and Friendship with one another.  
“ Hence they are not afraid to censure  
“ those, that engage in this Dispute, and  
“ strenuously contend for the Christian  
“ Faith, as turbulent and injudicious Per-  
“ sons, who lay too great a Stress upon  
“ Matters of inferior Moment. Now to  
“ disabuse these Gentlemen, I will set  
“ before them the Weight and Importance  
“ of this Controversy. It is a Contro-  
“ versy that nearly affects Salvation, and  
“ concerns the very Being of Christiani-  
“ ty, since the Objects which the Ortho-  
“ dox and their Adversaries worship are  
“ essentially different. The Object which  
“ the Orthodox worship, is One who  
“ never had Beginning ; That which Dis-  
“ believers of Christ’s Deity worship, had  
“ a Beginning : The One Exists necessa-  
“ rily,

“ rily, the Other does not Exist necessa-  
“ rily: One, in the Opinion of the Wor-  
“ shipper, is equal with the Father, *God*  
“ *most High*, in Knowledge, Power, and  
“ Glory; the Other, in the Worshippers  
“ Judgment, is not equal with God most  
“ High, in Knowledge, Power and Glory.  
“ Now the plain Consequence of this  
“ Difference about the very Object of  
“ Worship is, that the Believers of Christ's  
“ Divinity must be condemned by their  
“ Adversaries, if they are true to their  
“ Principles, as guilty of Idolatry, for  
“ paying divine Worship to one, who, in  
“ their Opinion, is not God *most High*,  
“ Infinite, Eternal, and *of himself Omni-*  
“ *scient*; which I have shewn in a former  
“ Writing on this Subject, and shall more  
“ evidently evince in the Sequel of this  
“ Discourse. It will then follow, that  
“ the Disbelievers of Christ's Deity must  
“ be Idolaters likewise, by continuing  
“ in constant Communion with our  
“ Churches, which, in their Judgment, if  
“ they follow their own Doctrine, are  
“ guilty of that Impiety: And on the  
“ other hand, the Orthodox or Catho-  
“ licks, must look upon them as Idola-  
“ ters, for paying divine Honours to one  
“ who is not *God most High*. Since there-  
“ fore Controversies become, and are  
“ de-

“ denominated, Great and Important, from  
 “ the Greatness and Importance of their  
 “ Subject ; and since here the Object of  
 “ Divine Worship is the Point in Debate ;  
 “ this Dispute must be of the highest Na-  
 “ ture, and next to that about the Foun-  
 “ dation of all Religion, the Existence  
 “ of God ; and must be allow'd to be the  
 “ most material that can arise about the  
 “ Christian Scheme.”

I have chosen to quote you out upon this Argument, that the Reader might have the whole Strength of your Cause in one View ; for as to any other Appearance of Evidence in this Case, which is here promised in the Sequel of this Discourse, I have not been able to discover it. Now to dissipate this Mist of *Words*, and dissolve the Charm, I shall beg leave to make the following Remarks.

1. Then, it is a little surprizing, that you here attribute to *Christ* the most peculiar and personal Characters of *God the Father* ; such as *God most High*, *God in and of himself Infinite, Eternal, Omnipotent, and Omniscent* ; that is, if you mean any Thing, *God absolutely Supreme, Unoriginate, and Self-existent* ; for this you must say, to establish that absolute, strict and proper Equality and Co-ordination, which you here declare for in  
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the strongest Terms, and in Words that are most expressive of such an Equality. Now upon this foot you must either say, that *Christ*, as to his *Deity*, is the *self same Person* with God the *Father*; or else, that he is another Person distinct from the *Father*, but absolutely Co-ordinate with him, and in all respects equally high and glorious. If you should say, that *Christ*, as to his *Deity*, is the *same Person* with God the *Father*, you know the Consequences of this *Sabellian Scheme*; that it must from hence follow, that God the *Father* was incarnate, suffered, and died, as much as the *Son*, and this to make an Atonement and Satisfaction to *himself*; that when *Christ* says, *My Father is greater than I*, he means only that the Divine Nature is greater than the Human, or that himself, as God, was greater than himself as Man; that as often as our Saviour pray'd to and worshipped the *Father*, he pray'd to and worshipped *himself*; and that when, in his last Agonies, he cry'd out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, he must be understood of crying out to *himself*, as having forsaken *himself*. These, and such like Consequences, I presume you cannot bear, and the Current of Orthodoxy seems now to be turned another Way; and therefore, perhaps,

perhaps, you will say, that *Christ* is not the *same*, but another and distinct *Person* from God the *Father*, in all respects equally high and glorious. Now, though this might be demonstrated, upon many Accounts, to be absolutely impossible and contradictory, yet I shall here only insist upon that which must be obvious to every Man's Apprehension. 'Tis plain then, that where there is supposed to be a strict and proper Equality or Co-ordination between Two or more Persons, the Title and Character of *most High* cannot, with any Truth or Justice, be assumed by any one of them; because such an Assumption must derogate from the equal Honour and Glory of the other's. When therefore you stile *Christ* God *most High*, you must either suppose him *higher* than God the *Father*, or else you evidently derogate from, and deny, the *at least* equal Honour and Glory of the Father; since no one can be God *most High*, while there is *another*, who is at least *as high* and glorious as the former. If you should say, that you do not entitle *Christ* God *most High*, with respect to the *Father*, but only with respect to subordinate created Beings; this would be too trifling to deserve a serious Answer: since in this Sense you might as well be stiled the highest,

the most learned and honourable Philosopher or Divine; that is, the most high, learned and honourable in Reference to all those who are lower or less learned and honourable than your self. But,

2. I must observe farther, that you have here, by overdoing, ruin'd all, and unhappily involv'd your orthodox Friends, together with their Adversaries, in the Guilt of Idolatry. Instead of proving, that the Orthodox and their Adversaries must, in Consequence of their different and respective Principles, consider each other as Idolaters, you have prov'd that both Sides must be Idolaters upon your own *Principles*. Idolatry, in your Account, consists in paying any Religious or Divine Worship to any *One* who is not *God most high, God of himself, infinite, eternal, omniscient, &c. i. e. self-existent*. Now it is notorious, that all the learned Orthodox Writers, who have hitherto undertaken to give us the Sense of the Catholick Church in this Point, have ever declared it as the peculiar and personal Character of the *Father only*, to be *God most high, or the most high God, God in and of himself, God unoriginate, or self-existent, or God emphatically*; and they have still maintain'd, that *Christ* is *God of God, or God originate and begot-*

gotten, who has some Way or other deriv'd his whole Existence, Being, and Deity, from the *Father* : Yet all those Gentlemen professedly pay a properly religious and divine Worship to *Christ*, as God of God, or God begotten. Dr. *Waterland*, whose Authority you will not, I hope, slight in this Case, declares, that the *Father* only is *God emphatically*, i. e. God under a certain peculiar Sense, in which there is no other God besides him, and in which *Christ* himself is not God ; and therefore whenever he talks of an Equality, he takes Care to except the Case of *Unorigination* or *Self-existence*, by which he evidently destroys a real Equality, and establishes a *real Subordination* ; and I know of no considerable orthodox Writer who has ever contradicted him in this Point, or carry'd the Matter in any other Way : and yet the Doctor, and those of his Way, worship the *Son*, not as God *most high*, God of himself, or God absolutely supreme, unoriginate and unbegotten, but as God of God, or God begotten. Nothing can be more evident therefore than this, that the Doctor, and according to him the whole Catholick Church, must, upon your Principles, be Idolaters ; and consequently you ought, upon your *Hypothesis*, to separate from

B 2 them,

them, and renounce their Communion, as worshiping *One*, who by their own Acknowledgment is not *God most high*, God in and of himself, or God absolutely supreme. If therefore, Sir, you expect your Adversaries should take your Advice by separating Communion from you, I hope you will give them a good Example, by acting up to the Scheme you have advanced, and resolving into a Church of your own, consisting only of your self and a few private Friends.

3. Another Remark that I cannot but make upon this Reasoning of yours, and which I take to be well worth your serious Consideration, is, that you here apply the Name *Christ* to Two essentially distinct and infinitely different *Persons*, *intelligent Beings*, or *Agents*; and you all along perplex and darken your Discourse and Argument, by confounding those *Two Persons* under one and the same *Name*, as if they were *one* and the same *Person*. *Christ* with you is sometimes *God most high*, or the supreme God, and sometimes he is the *Man Christ Jesus* of *Nazareth*, or the *human Person* born of the Virgin: But is it possible, I beseech you, that the *most high God* should be the *Man Christ himself*, or that the *Man Christ* should be the supreme God *himself*?

himself? Can these two infinitely different and essentially distinct Persons be one and the same Self, or the same Person? or, can you possibly form any Notion or Idea of *human Nature* as abstracted from *human Personality*? If you should pretend any Thing like this, I hope you will think your self concerned to make it good, and not expect that People should submit to bare Dictates, or be determined only by pathetick Declamations, without the least Appearance of Truth, or the least Spark of Light or Evidence. This is that grand Pillar which must now be thought to support the whole Fabrick of Christianity, and upon which all who will not rest for eternal Salvation must be shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven; and yet in this whole Debate there has not been one orthodox Writer who has dar'd to meddle with it.

4. But that which is most material of all, as to the present Argument, is, that you here talk so much of *religious Worship* and *Idolatry*, without once settling or ascertaining the determinate Sense of the Words; and indeed you apply them in so general and confused a Manner, that it does not yet appear to me whether you mean any Thing by the Words or not.

You

You charge your Adversaries with Idolatry for worshiping *One*, who in their Opinion is not the *most high or supreme God*; and I have shewn that your orthodox Friends do the same, by their own Acknowledgment. It will be to no Purpose here to say, that the Orthodox however suppose Christ to be much higher and greater than their Adversaries make him, for still while they suppose him to be any Thing less than the *most high or supreme God*, they must be Idolaters in your Account.

But because I would not leave the Matter so much in the dark, I shall here lay down my own Principles, and leave it to your Choice, whether you will fall in with me, or advance something farther of your own that may be more consistent and intelligible. By *religious Worship*, then, I mean all that Obedience, of what Nature or Kind soever, which is considered as an Obligation upon Conscience, and resolved absolutely into the governing Will or Law of the *most high God*; and in Consequence of this, any such Act of Obedience, which is not resolved absolutely into the supreme Authority of the *most high God*, is in my Account Idolatry, or an Act of false and misplaced Worship.

I suppose it must be past dispute, that this supreme absolute Authority, or Right of Legislation, must be founded in an absolute Supremacy of Nature, Being, and Perfection, and can no more be communicated to any subordinate or inferior Being than unoriginate Self-existence. There cannot be imagined any higher or more peculiar Act of religious or divine Worship, than an absolute Submission of the Heart and Conscience to the legislative Authority, or governing Will of any Being, as such ; for where there is no farther Appeal, no superior Power or Authority acknowledged, there cannot be any higher or more absolute Obedience. As this supreme Authority, with respect to the inward free Obedience of the Heart and Conscience, is absolute, so it is likewise evidently universal or unlimited, extending to all possible Cases whatever ; or, which is the same Thing, the constituting any Law which shall bind the Conscience under the Sanctions of Eternal Life and Death, is the incommunicable and sole Prerogative of the *supreme* or most high God ; and therefore, where any subordinate Being sets up his *own Will* as the supreme Law, and claims an absolute Submission and Obedience of Conscience to this his Will *as such*, he so far places

places himself in Room of the most High, challenges a properly religious and divine Worship, and assumes that peculiar Glory which God will not, and cannot give to another. In Consequence of this, it must follow, that no subordinate Will whatever can have any binding Force or Obligation upon Conscience : For either it will be agreeable to the Will and Law of God or not ; if not, the Case is plain, that it cannot bind the Conscience ; but if it be agreeable to the Will of God, as requiring the same Thing that God has likewise commanded, the Obligation, or binding Force upon Conscience, arises not from any such subordinate Will or Law *as such*, or in it self considered, but from the prior and superior Will of God, which is strictly and properly the Law, into which all Obedience of Conscience must be absolutely and rightfully resolved. It has, I know, been pretended, that subordinate Rulers, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, have strictly and properly a legislative Authority vested in themselves, especially in Things merely indifferent, and where God has not interposed by any prior Determination or Law of his own. But with Submission, this is ascribing to them a strictly divine Authority, and paying them a properly religi-  
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ous Worship and Obedience, and that in the highest and most unexceptionable Instances of it. The necessary Rectitude and Perfection of the divine Nature, is commonly the Rule and Measure upon which God himself constitutes his Laws, and determines his Will; and he very rarely exercises that most peculiar Prerogative of all, in commanding Things purely indifferent, merely for the Tryal of the most absolute Resignation and Obedience. There cannot therefore be a more absurd or extravagant Pretence than this, that any subordinate Rulers have an Authority of making Laws about Things *purely indifferent*; for where the Matter and all the Circumstances of the Law are supposed to be indifferent, the Law is confessedly founded upon no Reason or Necessity at all, and serves only to exercise an absolute uncontroulable Power, and that in the most extraordinary Instance of it that can be imagined as peculiar to God himself. But tho' God has reserv'd to himself the Right and Prerogative of trying the Obedience of his Creatures in this Way, yet he cannot possibly give his *Glory* in this Case to another, without divesting himself of his Deity or supreme Dominion. It will be here ask'd, perhaps, If this be so, that

all proper legislative Authority is peculiar to God *most high*, what Authority has subordinate Rulers ; and wherein does their Power consist ? I answer in Promulgation and Jurisdiction, or in the Right of declaring, divulging, and executing the Laws of God, by applying them to particular Persons and Circumstances : For tho' all proper legislative Authority be peculiar to God only, yet it does not appear that he ever declared or executed his own Will by himself immediately, in his own Person, and without any subordinate Agency ; this therefore is a Trust which he commits to subordinate Agents in different Degrees and Measures, according to their different *Natures, Situations and Capacities.*

The Limits to which I have confin'd my self, will not permit me here to apply this to all the particular Cases in which it might serve to give Light ; but I must not omit that famous Distinction between supreme and mediatorial or subordinate *Worship*, which has lately occasioned some Debate betwixt the Reverend Mr. *Pyke*, and the learned Author of *The Unity*, &c. I take Leave here, Sir, to mention Mr. *Pyke's* Name, because I presume he is an Author highly in your Favour, and one who has been thought to have

have advanced something of Consequence in this Matter : However, I doubt not but it must appear to Mr. Pyke, and to the whole World, upon a little Consideration, that *his supreme Worship*, when rightly understood, will be the very same Thing with his Adversary's *mediatorial* or *subordinate Worship* ; and that he has contradicted him for no other Reason in the World, but only because he did not, or would not understand him. I think it must be evident beyond all Contradiction, that the inward sincere Obedience and Conformity of our Hearts and Wills to the supreme Authority and Law of God, is that which constitutes the Religion of any Action ; and therefore every Act which is equally founded upon, and resolved into, the same supreme Authority, will be equally a religious Act, and a Part of divine Worship, be its direct and immediate Object what it will. The Distinction between supreme and mediatorial or subordinate Worship, is not grounded upon the different Authority into which it is ultimately and absolutely resolved, but upon the different Object on which it is considered as terminated, and which may be either supreme or subordinate, while the *Constitutive Authority*, and consequently the *Religion*

ligion of the Act, is still the same. He who honours and obeys *Parents, Magistrates*, and all other Superiors in the Lord, or as God has appointed and commanded, does at the same Time, and in the same Act, pay the highest Honour to God, by resolving all such subordinate Honour and Obedience absolutely into the supreme Authority and Will of God; which is doubtless the highest Instance of Honour, Veneration and Respect, that can possibly be paid to any Being. Will any Man of common Sense say, that his honouring and obeying Parents, Magistrates, &c. is no Part of his Religion; or that God himself is not strictly and properly honoured, worshipped and obey'd in our so doing, while all such subordinate Honour is regulated by, and absolutely resolv'd into the Will of God? Now if Mr. *Pyke* cannot say, either that he does not honour Christ as *Mediator* at all, or that his thus honouring him is no Part of his Religion, or that he honours him as *Mediator*, under the Notion of the *supreme God*; if he cannot, I say, stand to either of these, as I presume he will not, I must leave him and others to consider what real Opposition he has made to the Author of *The Unity*, &c. in all that he would be thought to have said against him

him on the Point of supreme and mediatorial Worship. If by *supreme Worship* he means all that Obedience, of what Nature soever, or upon what Object soever terminated, which is ultimately and absolutely resolved into the supreme Authority and Will of God ; it is granted him, that in this Sense there is no such thing as subordinate Worship, nor did ever any Body in this Sense contend for it. But if he means, that all the Honour due to subordinate Beings by the Will and Appointment of God, is no Part of his *Religion*, or that God is not hereby worshipped and served, he may take the Honour to himself of having set up a new Religion, or Method of worshipping God, that was never known or heard of in the World before. In the first Case he will contradict no Body, in the second he will contradict every Body. And therefore he may take his Choice here, whether he will have no Adversary, or no Friend ; none to oppose, or none to defend him.

I hope, Sir, you will pardon me this Digression, which however I thought not wholly beside the Purpose ; and I shall now proceed more directly to your Argument, by which you endeavour to prove, that your Orthodox Friends, and their Adversaries, ought, upon their different

ferent and respective Principles, to consider and treat each other as Idolaters. But, in the first place, I must seriously profess to you, Sir, that I am heartily sorry to see the Tempt you are in, and to think, that I must yet contribute so much more towards the heightening and inflaming your Passions ; which I fear the bare Necessity of the Argument will force me to, whatever Favour I should allow you upon other Accounts. 'Tis great Pity, methinks, to see you thus arming your self with inexorable Revenge, and breathing nothing but Slaughter and Destruction, Hell and Damnation, against your innocent Brethren, and Fellow Christians, who never did you any Injury, and who would not do it if they had it in their Power ; but are willing to live peaceably with you, as good Subjects, and good Christians, in worshipping the one only *true God*, through the alone Mediation of his only *begotten Son*, by the joint Aid and Assistance of the same *blessed Spirit*, and in hope of the same immortal Crown and *Kingdom of Glory*. But this it seems will not do, your Fury is not to be appeased with Friendship or Religion ; and indeed were your Power equal to your Anger, it must be very dangerous at this Juncture to approach you, and it would be high time

time for your Adversaries to betake themselves, if possible, to the Rocks and Mountains for shelter. However, as this *Rage of Imagination* can hurt no Body but your self, I shall venture even your highest Displeasure, in laying open what I look upon to be your Mistakes and Errors. In order to which, I shall only beg that you would pardon me the Presumption, Sir, of considering you as a mere Man, and a fallible Creature, which is the sole Postulatum I require, and all that I need against you. You state the Case of Idolatry between the Orthodox and the *Arians* thus: The Orthodox must look upon their Adversaries as *Idolaters*, because they pay divine Worship and Honour to *Christ*, while they believe him not to be the *supreme or most high God*, but a subordinate Being or Creature only; and these again must look upon the Orthodox as *Idolaters* for worshipping Christ as God *most High*, who is not so upon *Arian Principle*. And farther, while they continue knowingly and willingly to hold Communion with each other, they must strengthen and aggravate the same Guilt of Idolatry on both Sides, by a mutual Participation with those, who upon their different and respective Principles must be *Idolaters*. This is, I think, in  
short,

short, the whole Strength and Force of your Argument, tho' you draw it out thorough the whole Book, only for the sake of mixing it with all the Invective and Assurance you are Master of ; and hereupon you conclude, with great Secutity, p. 17.

“ And now let these subtle Disputants call “ in Aid all the Forces of Criticism and “ Philosophy ; let them explain, distin- “ guish, shift, and strive, as long as they “ please, to disentangle themselves ; they “ are here *set fast*, and can *never get off*.” If this be so, there is no help for it ; but if all this should appear, as I imagine it will, to be nothing else but *vain Confidence*, and mere empty *insignificant Boasting* ; perhaps you may repent this Dogmatizing, and learn before you step into the Grave, to be more *Catholick*, and less *Infallible*.

I must own you have set the whole Matter in as clear a Light as *Words* are capable of, without a *Meaning* ; but whenever we come to affix any certain determinate Sense to the Words *God*, *Christ*, *Religious Worship*, and *Idolatry*, your whole Argument will be lost, and every one will see that under great and specious Appearances, you have been saying *just nothing*. I have already laid down the general Principles, which being apply'd to the several Parts of your Argument, will

will easily discover its extream Weakness and Inconsequence.

You ground your Charge of Idolatry against your Adversaries upon this, that they pay religious or divine Honour to *Christ*, while they consider him only as a *subordinate Being*. You know very well that these Hereticks pretend to honour and obey *Christ as Mediator*, according to the Will and Appointment of God *the Father*: And methinks 'tis hard they should be Idolaters for *obeying God*. 'Tis evident that God has directed us to yield different Degrees of Honour, Respect, and Submission, to subordinate Beings, according to their different Relations to us, and the different Degrees of Authority and Jurisdiction they have over us: Now you must either allow, that That very Honour and Obedience which is thus paid to any such subordinate Being, by the Will and Appointment of God, is a Part of your religious Worship, or else you must say, that 'tis no Part of your Religion to *obey God*. I would here ask you, Sir, whether you and your Orthodox Friends do not honour and obey *Christ as Mediator*, or whether you do not submit your selves to the Authority and Jurisdiction of *that Man whom God has ordain'd to judge the World*, and where-

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of he hath given us sufficient Assurance in raising him from the Dead? If you will say, either that you do not honour and obey Christ *as Mediator* at all, or that this Honour and Obedience is no Part of your religious or divine Worship, or that you honour and obey Christ *as Mediator*, under the Notion of the *supreme God*, I presume your Adversaries will not envy you the Honour of this new Religion: But if you cannot stand to any of this, I verily believe you must either acquit the *Hereticks*, or condemn the *Orthodox*; which is indeed a very hard, but I imagine you will find it your only Choice.

Methinks I could give something considerable, if I had but your Definitions of *religious Worship*, and of *Idolatry*; but since I am not so happy, I must content my self with only guessing at your Meaning. I shall suppose therefore, which seems most likely, that by *religious Worship* you mean, that particular Degree and Measure of *Honour*, *Veneration*, and *Obedience*, which is due only to *God*, consider'd as a Being of *absolute, infinite Perfection*; which when paid to the true *God*, is true Religion, but when directed to any other Being, it is Idolatry and false Worship. If this be not your Meaning,

I think it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to discover it by your *Words*; and yet in this Account of the Matter, it must necessarily follow, that there never has been, nor can be, any such thing as *Idolatry in the World*. 'Tis very evident, that neither Heathens, Papists, or any other Idolaters, ever did pay that sort of *Honour or Veneration* to their *Idols* and *false Gods*, which is due only to the *true God*, considered as a Being of *absolute infinite Perfection*. The Heathens did not consider any one properly divine Attribute in any of *their Gods*, but ascribed to them human Appetites and Passions, nay, the worst of Lusts and Vices; and the Honour they pay'd them was such as, being paid to the *true God*, must have provoked him more than not worshipping him at all; and such as could be agreeable only to the Nature and Will of the Devil. And indeed they seem'd to consider no sort of Perfection in their *Idol Gods*, but that superior Knowledge and Power with which every one must suppose the Devil himself to be endued. Produce one single Instance, if you can, in which any of the Pagan *Idols* were considered by their Worshippers, as invested with *absolute infinite Perfection*, or in which any *false God* ever assumed the *real Character*,

racter, or peculiar Attributes, of the *true God*. This you cannot do, and yet you are so very secure upon the Point, that, p. 16. you claim the *universal Consent of all Christian Writers*. I cannot pretend to be acquainted with *all Christian Writers* upon this Subject; but there is one *Christian Writer* whose Authority, I presume, must have some Weight with you; I mean, the Learned Sir *Richard Blackmore*; who in the Instance of Popish Idolatry, respecting the Adoration of the Host, p. 19. has contradicted all that you have said about *religious Worship* and *Idolatry*. The Author just now quoted supposes the Papists to be guilty of Idolatry in worshipping the *Host*: That they are guilty of Idolatry in this Case, is agreed indeed by Protestant Writers; but how they should be so upon your Principles, I cannot see. Does a Papist suppose the *Body of Christ* to be endued with absolute Perfection, or that *Christ's Body* is the one *supreme self-existent Being*? Methinks you should not imagine this of them, at least you can have no Reason to imagine it. What if a Papist should tell you, as doubtless he would, that when he kneels before the Host, it is not properly the *Body*, but the *Person of Christ* that is the real Object of his *Worship*, and whom he thus

thus worships upon the Occasion of his supposed *bodily Presence*; Must you not allow this, where the Object is right, to be a true Act of Worship, whether Christ be bodily present or not? The worshipping Christ as bodily present, when he is not bodily present, is indeed a Mistake; but still you must own that whether he is or is not bodily present, he is always equally a proper Object of religious Adoration and Worship.

You observe, in the Place last quoted, speaking of the Papists, " That some of " their own best Writers are so honest " and ingenuous as freely to declare, that " if they are mistaken in the Article of " Transubstantiation, they are certainly I- " dolaters. But sure I am, Sir, that this honest, ingenuous Declaration can be nothing at all to your Purpose: How the Papists mistaking, or not mistaking, in the Point of Transubstantiation, should any way affect the Case of Idolatry upon your Principles, is wonderfully mysterious; for, is it not, I beseech you, as stupid and senseless a Piece of Idolatry to worship *Flesh* and *Blood*, as it is to worship *Bread* and *Wine*? or, can one System or Parcel of *Matter* claim, in this respect, any Preference to another? Perhaps you would allow it to be carrying the

the Matter a little too far to say, that Protestants worship and adore the Altar, or the consecrated Elements of *Bread and Wine*, when they kneel before them; and you can have as little Reason to conclude, that the Papists, when they kneel before the *Host*, pay their mental Adoration and Worship to a material senseless Mass of *Flesh and Blood*. The Papists here are guilty of Idolatry, because they resolve their *religious Obedience* into an *undue Authority*; this, and this only, is the very Essence of *Idolatry*, whether the Object be considered as finite or infinite, divine or human. The worshipping even the *true God*, by Means and Methods of mere *human Institution* and *Appointment*, is doubtless *Idolatry*; in which Case the Idol or false God is the *Magistrate*, the *Priest*, the *Church*, or whoever besides the *true God* claims an absolute, indisputable Authority, that must not be examined, or submitted to any farther or *higher Appeal*. The Popish Idolatry then, as I humbly conceive, does not consist in worshipping *Flesh and Blood*, or any bare *material Images*, but in worshipping the *Church*, that is, the *Priests*, by an *absolute blind Submission*; and this is indeed a sort of *Idolatry* from which some Protestants are not so entirely

ly free as one could wish. I shall not here stand to apply this Notion of Idolatry to particular Instances, but I will undertake at any Time to make it good, with respect to any Instance you can produce. Before, therefore, you can prove that your Adversaries are Idolaters upon *Orthodox Principles*, you must shew either that the Honour and Obedience they pay to *Christ the Mediator* is such as God has not appointed and commanded, or else that obeying God in this Case is no Part of true Religion, or *divine Worship*.

But if you cannot prove the *Arians* guilty of Idolatry, in Consequence of Orthodox Principles, you will still insist on it, that the Orthodox must certainly be Idolaters upon *Arian Principles*, because they, *the Orthodox*, worship Christ as the supreme or *most high God*, who in their Adversaries Opinion is but a *subordinate Being*. The Argument here is very pleasant; you would needs be thought Idolaters, and are angry with your Adversaries because they have any Charity for you, and will not renounce your Communion: But this *Comick Prologue* is to introduce a *Tragedy*; and the Reason, it seems, why your Adversaries charge you not with Idolatry is, because they do not follow the *clear im-*  
*medi-*

mediate and necessary Consequences of their own Principles; and perhaps, because they are afraid of the Temporal Inconveniences that might ensue upon such a Conduct. Perhaps, you think that *Charity* is a Duty not at all incumbent upon you and your Orthodox Friends: 'Tis enough for some People to assume an Air of Infallibility, and to pronounce as from the Throne of God, that no Man can possibly be honest or sincere who is not of their *Mind*, or does not see the Clearness and Justness of their *Interpretations* and *Consequences*. That *Charity* which suffereth long and is kind; envieth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up; which doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provok'd, thinketh no Evil, &c. I say, this sort of *Charity* would certainly have induced you to conclude rather, that the Reason why your Adversaries charge you not with Idolatry is, because they verily believe, upon Grounds which are to them sufficient, that you are not really guilty of it; and because they cannot see those Consequences from their own Principles which you are pleas'd to call *clear, immediate and necessary*. I must here solemnly protest to you, Sir, that this is my own Case; and that if I thought you really

really guilty of Idolatry, I should not be afraid, upon the Account of any *Temporal Inconvenience*, to declare against you as such, and to renounce your Communion: But whether I am mistaken in this, or ought not upon *Arian Principles* to think otherwise, is the Point now to be debated.

I would not have you conclude, that I am here declaring for *Arianism*; but I am willing to put my self in the Place of an *Arian* for once, to try the Force of your Argument, and whether an *Arian*, acting fairly upon his own Principles, must needs charge the Orthodox with Idolatry, and separate from their Communion. The Orthodox, you say, worship Christ as the supreme God, or *God most high*, as *God of himself*, infinite, eternal, omniscient, &c. which must therefore be an Object of Worship, essentially different from a subordinate derived Being: But in the first Place, 'tis sufficiently notorious that this is not Orthodoxy, and that all the learned Orthodox Writers have ever own'd that Christ is not God *absolutely supreme*, or *God most high*, or *God in and of himself*; but *God of God*, or *God the Son*, begotten of the *Father*, and who has some Way or other derived his whole Being and Perfection

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*from the Father.* It was never disputed betwixt the Orthodox and the *Arians*, whether Christ was an originated and derived Being ; they all allow'd his Origination, and the Communication of his Being and Existence from the Father ; and the only Dispute was about Eternity, and the Nature of the Abstract Substance, which they knew nothing of, and concerning which the Scripture had declared nothing. Now it is simply and absolutely impossible, that an unoriginate and an originate, or a self-existent and a deriv'd Being should be numerically the self-same Being ; for nothing can be an express Contradiction if this is not : And therefore those who in this present Eighteen Hundredth Century talk of Christ's absolute Supremacy, or absolute Co-ordination with the Father, are departed from the Catholick Sense, and the universal Declaration of all Orthodox Churches from the Beginning of Christianity down to this very Time ; and if you are not satisfy'd in this, I refer you for full Conviction to Dr. *Waterland* and Mr. *Cumming*. Here then, you are setting up a new Doctrine of your own, peculiar to your self and a few private Friends ; the Result, I suppose, of a new Orthodox Juncto, in which Christianity has

has been at length compleated by a few Winter Evenings Conferences : And while you are thus setting up for your self and Mr. *Cumming*, in Opposition to all Christian Churches, and all the Creeds and Confessions of Faith hitherto known in the World, 'tis but with an ill Grace, that you assume such an *Air of Assurance*, and give out your *infallible Dictates* concerning *Religious Worship* and *Idolatry*. But as I have taken some Notice of this already, and may have Occasion to insist on it farther under your Head of Subscriptions, I shall dismiss it here, and pursue your Argument about Idolatry.

Tis plain then, you must agree with your Adversaries, that Christ is a subordinate Being ; for you will not, I hope, deny the real Entity and Existence of the *Man Christ Jesus*, as essentially distinct from the *supreme God* ; and you cannot certainly say, that *Jesus of Nazareth*, or *the Man born of the Virgin*, is not *Christ*, because this is expressly asserted and very often repeated in the New Testament. Tis plain likewise, that the *Man Christ* is *he whom God hath ordained to be Lord and Judge of Quick and Dead* ; and that God has committed all Power and Judgment to the *Son of Man*, to *Christ the Mediator*, the authorized Messenger, the

*anointed of God.* Here then it is, I presume, past dispute, that you must submit to the Jurisdiction of *Christ*, in this his *Mediatorial Capacity*, according to the Will and Appointment of *God the Father*, who has *ordain'd* and *anointed him* to this *Office*, and required us to respect and honour him as our one and only *Mediator*; and tho' this Honour and Glory paid to *Christ as Mediator*, may be essentially different from that which is due to the *supreme God*, with respect to the different Object, yet as 'tis resolved into the same *supreme Authority* of the most *High God*, it is equally a Part of our *Religion* with any other Branch of *divine* or *religious Worship and Obedience*. And herein you must either agree with your Adversaries, or set up a New Religion, never heard of, or known in the World before. But here you will say, that you do not only worship and honour the *Man Christ*, or *Christ as Man*, but you likewise worship and glorify *him* as *God most High*; but who do you here mean by *Christ*? Who is this whom you worship as the supreme or *most high God*? Not certainly the *Man Christ*: If you worship the *Man Christ* as the supreme or most high God, you are indisputably Idolaters; and if you, with your Orthodox Friends, will

will stand to this, the *Arians*, and all *Christians*, shall have my Consent to separate from your Communion. But 'tis plain, that by *Christ* here, you can mean only the *supreme God*, and then all that you say amounts to this, that you worship the *supreme God*; as the *supreme God*. And I beseech you, are not your Adversaries agreed with you herein? Or have you Orthodox Gentlemen any other and different *supreme God* from the rest of the World? I must here ask you, Sir, whether *Christ* as God *most high*, is not the self same *most high God* with the *Father*, without any *essential Difference*? If you say he is not, you must make *two*, or rather *three most high Gods*, and *supreme Objects of Worship*, essentially different from *each other*; which being too gross and absurd, you will chuse doubtless to say, that *Christ* is essentially the very self same *most high God*, and *supreme Object of Worship* with God the *Father*. The necessary Consequence of which must be this, that whoever worships the *Father* as the one only living and true God, his *Worship* will be *essentially the same*, both in reference to the *Act* and *Object*, with yours. And therefore to pretend in *this Case*, that you have any different *Object of Worship*, is to impose

impose on your self with Names instead of Things, and then to unchurch and anathematize your Brethren and Fellow Christians, because they will not be imposed on in the same Manner.

You suppose, that the most high God is three Persons, or that the supreme God himself is *three Selfs*, three intelligent Agents; *i. e.* to make common Sense of it, *three intelligent Beings*, or *active Substances*. Now if you could make this Distinction intelligible, and free it from a Contradiction, as I believe you cannot; yet still it would rest upon you to shew that 'tis fundamental to Christianity, and that no Man ought to be admitted to Christian Communion who is not satisfy'd in it, and has not the same Notions about it that you have. But if you are from henceforth silent 'till you are able to do *this*, I never expect to hear from you more. If your Distinction, as above, gives you any different *Notions and Ideas of God*, as an *Object of Worship*, you are exceedingly to blame in not producing and laying them before the World; but if you have *no such*, you are still more to blame for pretending to it. When you have settled any clear determinate Meaning to the Words *God* and *Christ*, your whole Hypothesis

pothesis will vanish into Air and empty Sound. 'Tis evident, that the Name *Christ* stands sometimes with you for the *supreme God*, and sometimes for a *true and proper Man*: But you cannot say, that the *one true God* is a *true and proper Man*, or that a *true and proper Man* is the *one true God*; and 'tis manifest, that *these two* must be infinitely different, and essentially distinct *Beings, Agents, Persons*, or what you will: And therefore in your next, I hope you will clear up this *grand Point* in another Manner than you have yet done; I am sure 'tis what you ought to do, before you proceed farther with such sort of Clamour to distract and divide the miserable Churches; for whatever you imagine, Sir, it is not this airy Jingle, and School-play with *Words*, that will ever be sufficient to establish the Practice of true Religion, or to distinguish real Christians and sound Believers from Hereticks and Infidels. What has been said may, I presume, be sufficient to take off the mutual Charge of Idolatry, which you would have the contending Parties bring against each other; at least, I hope they will live peaceably together, and continue in Christian Communion, 'till you have better clear'd up your

your Pretensions to Argument and Reason upon this Point.

I shall now therefore proceed to examine, and make some Remarks upon the remaining Parts of your Discourse; for tho' I can see nothing but what has been already sufficiently considered and reply'd to, in other Writings; yet since it appears by the Warmth and Zeal you discover, that you look upon what you say to be of the utmost Consequence, I would not be thought to slight a Gentleman of your Character and Reputation in the learned World, as if you had offered any Thing not worth a farther Consideration. Do not mistake me, Sir, as if I was here confessedly putting my self to a needless Trouble, by removing Objections which have been sufficiently clear'd and obviated already; for I must own, that I am determined herein, not by my own Judgment but yours.

You have generously, as I have observ'd before, given up the coercive Power of the Magistrate in Matters purely Religious; where Mens Opinions are such, as do not either in themselves, or in the Manner of contending for them, endanger the publick Peace and Safety, you think very justly, that Men ought not to be punished for them. But after all

all, you put the Question concerning the civil Jurisdiction with a visible Partiality, as if the Power of the Magistrate in this Case might not equally be employ'd against the *Orthodox*, as against *Hereticks*, when they grow turbulent and unpeaceable about their Opinions. Your Words are these, p. 25. "Here a great Question will arise, whether God has invested the Magistrate with a Power to interpose coercively for the Preservation of the publick Peace, when contumacious and insolent *Hereticks* involve the Nation in turbulent Contentions and Party-Rage, which manifestly shake and endanger the Government? When Ecclesiastick Strife and Faction is carried on to such a Height, the Magistrate, whose Duty it is to protect the State, must be supposed to be entrusted with sufficient Power to do his Duty; and therefore, if the Repose and Safety of the State are greatly threatned, as before describ'd, he is certainly empower'd to prevent the Danger; and if no other than coercive Means are capable of procuring his End, they must be allow'd as lawful. But how far this coercive Force may be extended, and with what Limits it is circumscribed, is a Point not

" so easy to be determin'd." I fear, Sir, the Difficulty of Determination here, arises chiefly from a secret Reserve you have made in favour of your own Party; for otherwise I see nothing in the Case that could have much perplex'd you. Your Manner of Expression, certainly gives one some Ground for this Suspicion. But whatever may be doubtful in the Point, this I think is clear, that the Power of the Magistrate extends equally to all religious Parties without Exception. Let Mens *Opinions* be what they will, *true* or *false*, *right* or *wrong*, the Magistrate has an equal Right, and is equally obliged, to punish and restrain *those*, who contend for them in such a Manner as by their outward Practice to break and destroy the publick Peace, and endanger the Government. Now 'tis past all Dispute, that the boldest Pretenders to Orthodoxy may be, and often are, as imperious and turbulent, as factious and schismatical, and as hurtful and destructive to the Government, in the Methods they take for promoting their Opinions, as any Hereticks in the World. And therefore, if instead of *contumacious* and *insolent* *Hereticks*, one should put *contumacious* and *insolent* *Pretenders to Truth and Orthodoxy*, I hope you will allow,

allow that the Case would be still the same; and that as the Magistrate has an equal *Right*, so it must be equally his *Duty*, to preserve the publick Peace, and the Safety of the State, against the *one* as well as against the *other*: Which being supposed and granted, I readily profess my Agreement with you in this Point, and am willing to leave the Magistrate, upon this impartial View, to apply his coercive Power, as he shall find Occasion.

Having thus briefly dispatched the Business of Civil Jurisdiction, you proceed next to the Affairs of the *Church*, and endeavour to settle the proper and necessary Method for the Conviction and Ex-communication of *Hereticks*. I intirely agree with you, that since it is our Duty to separate from Hereticks, and not to hold religious Communion with them, a Heretick must be one who is capable of being detected, and judiciously proceeded against; for it would, indeed, be ridiculous in the last Degree, to say, that we are bound in Conscience to avoid Persons whom we cannot possibly know or find out. And yet this is your Distress in the Case of Heresy, as you have here managed the Matter. You place Heresy in inward speculative Opinions,

as abstracted from any outward heretical Practice ; and then you haye no other Way to *convict the Heretick*, but by extorting Confessions from him, and making him plead guilty against your own *Law*, while you sit upon him as *Judge* ; a Method of Procedure the most unjust and infamous of any in the World, and such as was never allow'd in any Court but that of a *popish Inquisition*. In all other Methods of judicial Process among Men, the Person accused, or suspected, is first to be proved guilty by judicial Evidence, or credible capable Witnesses, attesting upon their own Knowledge to the Truth of the Facts for which he is accused ; and no Man is obliged to impeach and condemn himself : But here is a more refin'd Method of Judgment set up, by which fallible Creatures are enabled to assume the Prerogatives of *Christ*, and exercise a *spiritual and divine Jurisdiction* over the Hearts and Consciences of their *Fellow Christians*. For here, as you can have no Evidence but *Confession*, so even that *Confession* cannot be proved *Heretical* without knowing the Person's Heart : For should you be supposed infallibly in the right your self, yet he who differs from you may be sincerely and innocently mistaken, for any Thing

Thing you can possibly know, or prove against him. You must here give me leave to ask, whether you would take your Oath in a Court of Judicature, that your Opinion about the Trinity is certainly right, and that another, who is not of your Mind in the Case, cannot be fit by the *Laws of Christ* for Christian Communion? If you, or any of your Orthodox Friends, cannot swear to the Truth of this in Fact; with what Reason or Equity can you sit in Judgment against another upon it, when you may as well, and are as likely to be mistaken, as your condemned excommunicated Brother.

It must be observed here, that the Question is *this*, whether fallible uninspired Men have any Authority from Christ, to settle and determine any Thing as a fundamental *Article of Faith*, or as necessary to *Salvation* and *Christian Communion*, which the Holy Ghost has not *clearly, expressly, and definitively* declared as such in *Scripture*? Or if you will, whether the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel have any Right to set up their own *Interpretations and Consequences*, as necessary Terms of Salvation and Christian Communion, where Christ and the Apostles have made no such particular

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Determinations in Scripture? The Affirmative of this is the Doctrine which you maintain; and the only Condition, it seems, upon which you will have any Christian Peace, Charity or Communion. He who cannot admit of *this*, must not be allow'd to be of *your Religion*; because, in your Opinion, he saps the very Foundations of all Christian Faith and Practice, and leaves no Room for the Conviction and Extermination of *Hereticks*, no possibility of guarding the Church against *damnable Error*: Since all, even the very worst of *Hereticks*, will subscribe the *Scriptures*; and consequently, if *these* be allow'd as a *sufficient Test*, it will be impossible to withhold our Communion from *Hereticks*, as the Gospel requires. This is your Doctrine, and thus you support it. *Hereticks*, you say, may wrest and pervert the Scripture to their own Destruction. Well, be it so; and what then is the Remedy? Why, to prevent such an Abuse, the true Sense of Scripture must be explain'd and limited. Explain'd and limited, by whom I beseech you? Why truly, by fallible uninspired Men, who are as liable and as likely to mistake and wrest the *true Sense* of Scripture, as any of those for whom they are contriving *Tests*, and excluding under

under the Name of *Hereticks*: And yet, fallible and uninspired as they are, we must suppose them in your Way, to be *wiser and more merciful than God*, and capable of delivering the Mind and Will of God, in Terms more clear, express, and unexceptionable, than the *Holy Ghost* has done. Those who have made this exorbitant Claim, and pretended to explain and define the Sense of Scripture, in Things necessary to Salvation, clearer than the inspired Writers, under the Direction of the *Holy Ghost*, have always in Fact darkened and perplex'd the Doctrines of the *Gospel*, instead of clearing and explaining them; and those few most plain and simple Articles of Faith, which the Scripture truly declares as Fundamental, and Necessary, have been rendered absolutely unintelligible, by that Time our infallible *Creed-makers* have sufficiently limited and explain'd them.

The Sum and Substance of Christianity, according to the Plan of the present Orthodoxy, is now reduced to two Propositions.

1. That the Father, Son, and *Holy Ghost*, are three intelligent Agents, in one *undivided Substance*, or *Essence*; which *one Substance*, or *Essence*, makes them *one God*.
2. That

2. That the *Man Christ*, or *Jesus of Nazareth*, and the *supreme or most high God*, do both together constitute the one single *Person of Christ*; and that the *Man Christ*, or *Jesus of Nazareth*, never was a *humane Person*.

And who now must define your Definitions, and explain your Explications of Scripture? For nothing, certainly, in the Scripture it self, can so much need a farther Explication as *this*; nay, when you have thus limited and defined the Sense of Scripture, it will be impossible you should ever prove, that it is, indeed, the Sense of Scripture, or that you have not lost the *true Sense* in the *pretended Explication*. Suppose now, I should be willing upon reasonable Terms to subscribe the Scripture in *your Sense*, or to list my self into *your Party*; what Security can you give me, that *your Sense* is the *true Sense*, or *any Sense*? I presume, you would not secure me upon *Oath*, and I am under some Difficulties against taking your *Word for it*. And therefore, since I cannot possibly be convinced by your *Arguments*, I hope you will suspend the Sentence of Heresy and Excommunication, till you have clear'd the Matter a little farther.

But

But let us suppose that your humane Creed or Test, whatever it be, contains the *true Sense of Scripture*; yet still I cannot see how it should be any Remedy against Heresy, or any Means of detecting the Heretick more than the Scripture it self. Hereticks, you say, will readily subscribe the Scriptures, tho' in an unscriptural Sense; and what then should hinder them from subscribing humane Tests and Creeds in the same Manner? If they will deal treacherously with the *Word of God*, why not with the *Words of Men*? You must certainly suppose a Heretick to be a *Hypocrite* and a *Deceiver*, and one who is *self condemned* in his *Hypocrisy*, as designedly acting a *treacherous Part*; for I hope you will not say, that a good and *sincere Christian* may be *an Heretick*. A Person sincerely disposed to know the Truth in order to Practice, tho' he may be *mistaken*, yet he cannot be *an Heretick*. For if a bare Mistake of *Judgment*, without any *evil Intention*, be *Heresy*; let those who condemn their Brethren upon this Foot look to themselves, and tremble to think with what Face they will stand before the Judge, in the Day of their Accounts! But since it is plain, that the moral Wickedness of the Heart, or an evil and treacherous Intention,

tention, join'd with the *Error of Judgment*, is necessary to constitute *an Heretick*; 'tis evident that this must dispose the Man to subscribe any Creed or Confession of Faith whatever, whether scriptural or unscriptural, divine or humane, if he finds it for his Turn and Interest. And therefore, your boasted Method of Security can serve only to brand and exclude from the Communion of the Church, honest and good Men, or such as act upon Principles of Conscience, and from the religious Fear of God; but can be of no Use or Service at all against *real Hereticks*. 'Tis plain, there can be no Test against inward Heart Hypocrify, *as such*; and when the evil Intention shall appear in any outward ill Practice, contrary to the Obligations of Christianity, and the Laws of the Gospel, there will be no need of any *other Test*; but you may then, by the Consent of all good Men, avoid the Heretick, and exclude him from your Communion as soon as you please, if he refuses to reform his *evil Practice*, upon *sufficient Admonition*.

But 'tis pretended, that *all Churches*, in common with all other *voluntary Societies*, must have an undoubted Right to settle their own Terms of Communion, and in Consequence of this, to require  
of

of all their Members a Conformity of Judgment to certain *humane Tests*, and Standards of Faith and Orthodoxy, without which, they are not to be admitted to the Communion of that particular Church. Hence you tell us, p. 22. " It is strange, even to *Admiration*, that Men should believe, that to be an Imposition, which is only a Mark, or Testimony, of a Person's Qualification to be a Member of a Christian Society, which the Person to whom it is proposed, may comply with, or refuse, without incurring any Penalty. Have not all Civil Societies of what Denomination soever, all voluntary Cabals and Assemblies of Men, some Rules and Orders which the Members engage to observe? And if any are deny'd Admission, or excluded, because they refused this Qualification, may they therefore complain of unwarrantable Impositions?"

You must give me leave, Sir, here in my Turn, to observe it with *Wonder*, that a learned Protestant should place *Christian Churches* upon the same Foundation with *civil voluntary Societies*, which are of mere *humane Institution*, and subsist purely upon their *own Constitutions and Laws*. I deny that *Christian*

*Churches* are *voluntary Societies*, in the Sense you refer to, or that they have any Power to constitute their own Terms of Communion. It is not left to the Determination of *Christian Churches* what shall be the Conditions of admitting, or excluding their *own Members*, as is the Case in all *civil voluntary Societies*; and your supposing this must involve you in Consequences equally absurd, and Anti-christian with Popery itself. Nothing, I think, can be more evident than this, that Christians are not left to their *Liberty*, whether they will resolve themselves into particular Churches and worshipping Assemblies, or not; nor are they even then at Liberty to determine what the Terms of Communion, or the Conditions of Admission and Exclusion, shall be. These Things are all antecedently fix'd and determined for the whole Catholick Church, by *Christ himself*; which no particular Church can have any Right to supersede or alter. That particular Church cannot certainly be any Part of the true Catholick Church, whose Terms of Communion are not Catholick, and who exclude Men from their religious Fellowship, and Worship, on the Account of *any Thing*, for which Christ will not exclude them from

from the *Kingdom of Heaven*. I take it to be one of the first Principles of Christianity, and without which 'tis impossible the Laws of Christ should be ever put in Execution, that there is no mere *humane Authority*, or legislative Power in the Church; and therefore I fear, your *Independent By-Laws* are often made in bar of the *divine Charter*.

But you say, if a Person is excluded from a particular Communion, because he cannot submit to their Terms, there is no Harm done; for if he cannot comply, he is at Liberty to refuse; which he may do without incurring *any Penalty*. You, I think, are the first *Disciplinarian* who has ever said that *Excommunication* is *no Penalty*. If Exclusion be *no Penalty*, it must, I suppose follow, that *Admission* is *no Privilege*, and that the Person who refuses to comply with their Terms of Communion, is guilty of *no Fault*; which yet, methinks, should be no great Complement to any *Christian Church*. But by *no Penalty*, here, perhaps, you mean *no Civil Penalty*; or that the Dissenter, or Person excommunicated, is not fined, imprisoned, or put to Death: But *these Penalties*, you know, are not always in the *Church's Power*; and therefore, if not always inflicted in such

such Cases, this, perhaps, may be no  
Thanks to *the Church*. But if you can  
name me any Church, who, having the  
Advantage of the Civil Law, has not  
made Use of it to enforce her spiritual  
Censures, I shall own it as a very consider-  
able Discovery. The Church, you must  
allow, has a Power to inflict spiritual  
Censures and Penalty, such as giving  
Men over to *Satan*, branding them for  
Hereticks, marking them out for Repro-  
bation, warning all Christians to avoid  
their Society and Conversation, and not  
to shew them any Marks of Friendship  
or Charity; but to look upon them as  
abandoned Wretches, and Enemies to  
God, and the Souls of Men. Now all  
this, or whatever may be the Conse-  
quence of it, has doubtless nothing pe-  
nal in it; and the Church Executioner,  
after all, will be ready to wash his Hands,  
and declare in the *Name of God*, that  
he is perfectly innocent; and that he has  
not intended the least Hurt, or done the  
least Injury, to his *Brother*. Now it will  
be sufficient in your Way to justify a  
Man, in all this Barbarity and Outrage  
against another Christian who differs from  
him in Judgment, if the *Zealot* has but  
a *common Assurance* that he is *actually*  
in the Right, and can but out-face *God*  
and

and the *World*, while he is violating all the Laws of *Nature* and *Christianity*.

But in Opposition to your Method of convicting and exterminating Hereticks, I shall now endeavour to prove, that the only Test of *Christian Faith and Orthodoxy*, so far as it falls under any humane Cognizance and Jurisdiction, is *Christian Practice*; and that to insist on any other Test in a Way of humane Jurisdiction, must be attended with all the fatal Consequences of Popish Infallibility, and Anti-*Christian* Tyranny. I shall here lay it down as a Principle, which, I think, cannot be contested, that *there is no necessary Connexion betwixt Speculation and Practice of any Sort or Kind whatever; but the Speculation may be right, where the Practice is wrong; and on the contrary, the Practice may be right, where the Judgment in Speculation or Theory is wrong*. However, it must not be concluded from hence, that a *right Practice* can be determined and directed without Judgment; for *that Judgment* which has an immediate necessary Connexion with *the Practice*, is certainly right where the Practice is right, and wrong if the Practice be wrong. Therefore, to avoid Confusion and Mistake, I must here distinguish between the *speculative* and the *practical*

*practical Judgment*: I call that the speculative Judgment, which determines concerning the bare abstract Truth or Falshood of *Propositions*; and the practical Judgment is that, which determines concerning the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness, the Fitness or Unfitness of Actions, as they fall under the Power and Command of the Will. If we take the World as we find it, and consider Mankind as they really are, it will appear, that their abstract Notions and Speculations of Things are almost infinitely and unavoidably different; they depend upon such different Capacities, Talents Means, and Opportunities, as to be very little the Matter of their Choice, or under the Conduct and Direction of the Will. Some Men, merely for want of natural Capacities, can never arrive at that Accuracy and Exactness of Judgment, which others obtain with Ease; and some again, without any Superiority of Genius, or Merit of their own, have their speculative Views wonderfully extended and enlarged, and are set vastly above the common Level of Mankind, merely by the Lot of their Birth, Education, and other providential Incidents. Now from hence, there must arise an unavoidable Difference in Mens speculative Notions.

Notions and Conceptions of Things; and where they use the *same Words*, without suspecting a *different Sense*, they will yet mean at most, but partly the *same Thing*.

A Philosopher's Notion and Idea of *the Sun*, is as different from the Notion or Idea of an ignorant Countryman, when he uses the *same Word*, as the Idea of a Candle or Lamp, is from that of a burning World, or a vast Globe of liquid glowing Fire. Now, must it not appear extremely unreasonable and absurd in this Case, should the Philosopher fall foul upon the poor Countryman for his false mistaken Notion of *the Sun*; telling him, that he is a stupid, groveling, unthankful Wretch, and that by his false Judgment concerning *the Sun*, he undervalues that glorious *Luminary*, and is not therefore worthy or fit to enjoy *its Light*.

But this, and other like Instances may be thought, perhaps, not so much to the Purpose; and therefore I shall apply the Case to Things of a moral and religious Nature, in which every one must perceive its Force. The Belief of a God, is doubtless the Foundation of all Religion; and therefore, if a right Notion, or speculative Judgment concerning any Object, be supposed necessary, it

must certainly be so with Respect to the Nature, the essential Attributes, and Perfections of God: And yet, let the above-mentioned plain Countryman, how pious and religious soever, be examined in these Matters upon any Principles that are strictly true in the Nature and Reason of Things; and I dare engage for it, that his Notions and Apprehensions concerning *God*, and the *divine Perfections*, shall be found in many Respects as inaccurate, and as far from being just or true, as are his Notions and Ideas concerning the *Sun*, a *Star*, or any other mere *natural Object*: And yet, while his Notion and Belief of God is such, as determine him practically to a religious Fear and Trust, Obedience and Love, it is sufficient to answer his Purpose as a Christian, and available enough for the Salvation of his Soul. Now, tho' in this Case, the Man's speculative Mistakes and Errors concerning the Nature and Perfections of God, might be such as, being strictly pursued, would be inconsistent in their necessary Consequences with the Being and Perfections of God; yet these speculative Errors and their Consequences cannot be imputed to him, so as to hinder his Salvation and Acceptance, while they do not hinder his practical Obedience,  
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Love, and Dependance upon God ; and to say otherwise, is to proceed upon a Principle, which, in its necessary Consequences, must equally exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven all Mankind without Exception, and render the Christian Revelation of no Use or Signification at all. I am perswaded, there is no Speculatist, how conceited or refin'd soever, but what has some speculative Error, some wrong Notion or other concerning God ; he ascribes some Things to him as Perfections which really are not so, and cannot belong to him ; and denies other Things of God as Imperfections, which in Truth are not such. Now should any such speculative Error, or Mistake of Judgment, be pursued in its natural necessary Consequences, it must be found absolutely inconsistent with the Being and Perfections of God. And in this Way, there is no Man but might by necessary Consequence, from some Mistake or false Notion or other concerning God, be proved to be an Atheist. But the Absurdity and Injustice of such a Method, as destructive of all Charity, and all Religion, must be too visible to need any long Debate about it.

The Belief of the Resurrection, of the future Judgment, and of the Rewards and

Punishments of another World, are undoubtedly fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith; and yet, I think, it cannot be deny'd, but Mens speculative Notions and Apprehensions about these Matters, are as various and different, as about any of the most common and indifferent Matters in the World. Now, let but proper Tests be prepared to oblige all Men, as the Condition of their Church-Communion, to believe the Resurrection, the last Judgment, the Happiness of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, precisely in the *same Sense*; and Mens unavoidably different Judgment and Opinions concerning these Things will soon appear, together with the Impossibility of uniting them by any such Method, as well as the Vanity, Absurdity, and Arrogance of pretending to it.

That Man's Faith must certainly be *true* and *saving*, which determines him practically to the several Duties and Obligations of *Christianity*; and serves to work him up into a divine and heavenly Disposition, in Conformity to the *holy Nature* and *Will of God*, tho' he may have different Notions and Apprehensions concerning the several Matters and Objects of his Faith, from those of *another Man*; who may yet agree with him

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in the same common *Practice* of *Christianity*. I know, every *Zealot* will be ready to cry up his speculative *Scheme* and *Theory*, as having the most immediate and direct Influence upon *Christian Practice*; and while it has this Influence upon his own *Practice*, it is well; but let him not conclude from hence, that another Man may not be determined to the same *Practice*, under different *Notions* and *Apprehensions* of *Things*.

The *Antinomians* and *Arminians* have differed very considerably about some of the most material Points of speculative *Belief*; and yet, I think, he must be a most hopeless and incurable *Bigot* indeed, who will not allow, that there have been, and still are, very good *Christians* on *both Sides*. The *Devil* has certainly a more true and adequate *Notion* of the *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and of the several fundamental *Articles* of the *Christian Faith*, than any *Creed-makers* can pretend to; and the *Disciples* had but an indifferent Understanding concerning *our Saviour*, and the *Nature* of his *Kingdom*, when they expected Preferment under him as a *Civil Sovereign* or *Temporal Prince*; and yet, I imagine, no Body will say, either that the *Devil* may be saved by his *Orthodoxy*, or that the *Disciples*

ciples were in a damnable State for their mistaken Judgment.

For my own Part, I am fully and clearly persuaded, that the *Athanasian Scheme*, relating to the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, is unscriptural and self-contradictory, and that pursued in its just and necessary Consequences, it must overthrow the *whole Christian Revelation*; yet I dare not charge an *Athanasian* with these Consequences, as if they made up a Part of his real Belief, or were, indeed, intended by him; for when he professes that he does not see them, I think my self bound in Charity to believe, that he *cannot*, and therefore is not obliged to *see them*; especially, when I observe him practising all the Duties, and submitting to the several Obligations of Christianity, I must necessarily own him as a Brother and Fellow Christian. If he will not extend the same Charity to me, I cannot help it: But have this however to comfort me, that he is not to be my Judge; and tho' he may presume to censure and condemn me here, yet I expect, and appeal to a more righteous Judgment another Day.

After all, I presume, you must allow, that he who shall profess to believe the Scriptures, as the certain infallible Word of

of God, and the only Rule of Christian Faith and Practice, and that he uses his best Endeavours to understand them right, and to live accordingly: I say, you must allow such a one to be duly qualify'd for Christian Communion, provided he be *sincere* in this *Profession*, and his *Practice* does not contradict it. Now, 'tis evident, that outward Profession and Practice is all that can possibly fall under any *humane Cognizance* or *Jurisdiction*. But a Man's Practice will have no need of any Test to discover it, that being open and visible to the whole World; and as for the Sincerity of his Profession or Practice, that cannot possibly be discovered without knowing the Heart. Now, when you suspect a Man of subscribing the Scripture insincerely, and then offer him a humane Test to subscribe; 'tis plain, that this can neither remove nor discover his Insincerity: And therefore, I fear that this is a mere Pretence, and that there is commonly something else in it, not so proper to be own'd. When you have thus rejected a Profession and Practice purely upon the Foot of *Scripture*, as an insufficient *Test of Christianity*, you have nothing else to do, but to set up your own private *Judgment* and Sense of *Scripture*, as the universal Test and Standard

Standard of all *Christian Faith* and *Orthodoxy*; in which, there is this remarkable Piece of *Injustice*, that while you declare the Scripture to be the only Rule of *your Faith*, you will not allow it to be so with respect to *other Men*. The Scripture is your only Rule, but your Judgment and Sense of Scripture must be the only Rule to every Body else, or otherwise you will have nothing to do with them in the Way of *Christian Communion*, *Peace*, and *Charity*.

If you should pretend, that 'tis not your *own Sense*, but the *Catholick Sense*, or the *Sense* of the *Church*, that you insist upon; I hope you would urge the Authority of the Church in this Case only in jest, and that you do not in good earnest believe implicitly as the Church believes. If your Faith has been grounded upon Scripture in Consequence of a fair Examination, this Faith must be the same, while the Ground of it is the same, whether the Church should agree with you or not: And therefore, it is simply and purely your *own Sense*, and nothing else, that you must, upon your Principles, set up as the universal Test and Standard of *Orthodoxy* and *Christian Communion*. Now, for the same Reason, and upon the same Principles, every Man else will have

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an equal Right to set up his own Sense in the same Manher, whatever it be; for I imagine you would be extremely hard put to it, to assign any Reason or Pretence, in order to justify this Method in *your self* and *your own Party*, that must not equally justify it in *all other Parties*, whatever *their Opinions* are. And this gives one, at once, a full View of the peculiar Excellency and Advantages of your happy Scheme; and how glorious a State of Religion that must be, where this Principle should be put in Practice in all its natural and most obvious Consequences. Who can express the universal Madness, Outrage, and Confusion that must ensue upon it? It must put the Church into as bad a Circumstance, as *Hobbs's State of Nature*; and no two Churches upon Earth could maintain Christian Communion with each other; and even the particular Members of every individual Church must necessarily be divided and torn from one another, from the Catholic Church, and from Christ himself, as often as they should prepare *new Tests*, to reduce the *general Doctrines of Scripture*, to every Man's particular Interpretations and Consequences. Nay, where the Scripture is supposed to need any *explanatory Tests*, as a *Rule of Faith*, that

very *Test* will as much need *another* to explain it, and that again *another*, and so on in *Infinitum*. And nothing can prevent this universal endless Confusion, but an universal Lethargy, a stupid blind Obedience, and implicite Faith: And indeed, in this Case, Popery it self must be thought a *proper Remedy*, and a much more eligible State of Things, than such a *publick Jurisdiction*, lodg'd in every *private Breast*. This is the very Thing that has hitherto divided and distracted the *Christian Church*, and that must ere this Time have crumbled it into Dust and Atoms, had not God, in his merciful and good Providence, prevented it, by restraining the *Spirit of Imposition*, which must otherwise have naturally produced *such an Effect*. Every Council that has since sat in the Christian World, have had as good a Right to make forty *New Creeds*, as the Council of *Nice* had to make *that one*; nay, every *particular Church* or *private Person* have as good a Right as any of them: And, that this has not been done, is owing, not to the Principle it self, which must terminate in it, but either to *Prudence*, or *Policy*, or *blind Submission*.

Perhaps you will say, that at this rate it must follow, that the *Scripture Revelati-*  
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on has no determinate Sense at all, even in fundamental *Articles of Faith*, but every one may understand *them* differently, and yet be good Christians. To which I answer, that the Scripture has a clear determinate Sense enough, with respect to the general *Principles and Doctrines*, to which the Revelation is confin'd, and which is sufficient to answer all the Ends and Purposes of *true Religion*. But if you will go farther, and carry the certain infallible *Word of God* beyond the plain express *Declarations of God*; those interpretative Inferences and Deductions must needs be different, according to Mens different Capacities, Apprehensions, Opportunities, and Ways of Thinking, and none of them can be the certain infallible *Word of God*: They will all be the uncertain fallible Consequences and *Opinions of Men*; some of which, perhaps, may be demonstrated to be *false*, but not one of them will ever be demonstrated to be *true*.

I shall here endeavour to explain this, by an Instance or two. God has declared, that there will be a Resurrection of the Dead; that he will raise both the Just and Unjust, to stand before Christ in Judgment, and to pass under an impartial Trial and righteous Sentence, in or-

der to the vast eternal Rewards and Punishments of another World. Now all this is plain and intelligible enough, and sufficient to determine Men to a good Life, if they will be duly influenced by it, under the Cognizance and Inspection of the supreme Judge. But if you will carry Matters beyond the general Principles and express Declarations of Scripture, you may make a thousand Determinations, and draw an infinite Number of distinct and different Consequences, none of which can be the *Word of God*, or any *Part of Scripture*; and therefore, should you resolve them into necessary Articles of Faith, and require them to be believed as the Terms of your Communion, you must herein place your self in the Room of God, and require a Submission not to the *Authority of God*, but to *your own Authority*.

Thus should you pretend to pass it into an Article of Faith, that the *same Bodies* shall be raised in this or that determinate Sense of your own; as with the *same numerical Particles* they consisted of when laid in the Grave, or with the *same numerical Particles* they possess'd when the Soul departed; or should you declare that God always interposes by a miraculous Power to hinder any substantial Part of

of one *dead Body* from becoming successively a substantial Part of *another*; you might, by such a Method, discover Presumption enough, and procure sufficient Hatred, or Contempt, from those who cannot be of your Mind, and who may apprehend themselves ill treated by your Impositions; but you can never, in this Way, clear up the Scriptures, or promote the Cause of true Religion. 'Tis declared, that the Bodies of Men after the Resurrection will be *spiritual* and *incorruptible*: Now, that they will be then made fit and proper Instruments for the more spiritual and refin'd Operation of the Soul, and will not be subject to any of those continual Decays, to which they are now liable, is easy to conceive, and what every one will readily agree in; but when we come to any farther particular Determinations and Consequences, 'tis impossible but Men must have different Apprehensions, and form different Conclusions and Judgments, about the Nature, Existence, and Properties of spiritual incorruptible Bodies.

Again, 'tis expressly declared, that the Father and Son are *one*; for these are Christ's own Words, *I and my Father are one*. Now, 'tis plain from express Declarations of Scripture, and what every Body

Body will agree to, that they are one in Testimony, Consent, and Will, that they have one Interest and Design, and that they perfectly agree in all their Declarations concerning the Duty and Happiness of Mankind. If any one here should assert, and pretend to prove by Consequences, that the Unity must denote something farther, and particularly that they are *one in Substance and Essence, one supreme independent self-existent Being, or one most high God*, he will be involved under insuperable Difficulties, from which he will never be able to extricate himself; and therefore, should his Opinion be intelligible and possible, or even *true*, yet he can never make it *so clear and evident* as to render all Men inexcusable, and wickedly insincere, who cannot see it; and without which, should it be ever so *true*, it would be equally presumptuous and ridiculous, to suppose it a universally necessary and fundamental Article of the *Christian Faith*.

The like may be said of that other famous and disputed Text, concerning *the Three who bear Record in Heaven*: For supposing the Text to be true and genuine, all that can with Clearness be deduced from it, is this, that they are *three Witnesses* perfectly concurring and agreeing in the *same*

*same Testimony*, or in attesting to *one and the same Thing*. And if you, Sir, think you can draw any other Consequence from it, I should be glad to see the Trial of your Skill.

But what gives you the greatest Uneasiness of all, seems to be this, that some Persons, suspected of *Arianism*, subscribe the Orthodox Creeds, tho' in an *unorthodox*, *i. e.* a *Scripture Sense*. I should have thought it an uncontested Principle, among Protestants at least, that no Articles of Faith ought to be subscribed in any other than a *Scripture Sense*, and that every Man is equally to judge for himself what is that *Scripture Sense*: But 'tis your Opinion, that all humane Tests and Creeds ought to be subscribed in the *humane Sense* of the Imposers, or not subscribed at all. Upon this Occasion, you take the Liberty to load your Adversaries with all the reproachful and criminal Imputations that can be due to the most wicked and profligate of Men, for eluding the pious Design of those Imposers, who, notwithstanding their Infallibility and divine Prerogatives, desire to *know our Minds*. They ought, Sir, to be capable of knowing Mens Minds, without a Declaration or Confession from the supposed Criminal himself, for other-  
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wise nothing can be more senseless or ridiculous than the Jurisdiction they pretend to: And if they will vainly extend their Jurisdiction beyond their Cognizance, they must be content to bear the *Shame*, and the *Disappointment* of it.

But if humane Tests and Creeds must be subscribed only in the Sense of the Imposers; 'tis certain, that Multitudes of your own Orthodox Friends will be in as bad a Condition as the *Arians*. The *Arminian* and *Arian Subscribers* ought, doubtless, to join in Fellowship here, and can have no Reason to fall foul upon one another. I only just mention this, hoping, that when you come to be in a somewhat cooler Temper, you must needs see that all the Thunder-bolts, which on this Occasion you have discharged against the *Arians*, to sink them into the Lake of Fire, must fall with equal Weight and Vengeance upon your own Friends and Party.

Till I can see what I have offered fairly refuted, I must take it as sufficiently proved, that no mere humane Authority whatever can oblige Men to subscribe *any thing* as a *Rule of Faith*, or as necessary to *Salvation* and *Christian Communion*, but the *pure Word of God*, or the *Scripture it self*. Men may in many Cases

Cases undoubtedly bind themselves, and give up their own Liberty where God has not bound or restrain'd them; but then they have certainly a Right to judge for themselves in what Case they are to do this, and what not; and no Man ought to part with his Liberty in any Case, unless he apprehends some very good and valuable End may be obtain'd by it, sufficient to recompence him for the Right and Property which he gives up. Tho' a Command be ever so unjust or unreasonable, yet it may be fit and proper, upon some Occasions, to submit to it: As to deliver my Money, for Instance, to a Gentleman who demands it on the Road, if it be necessary to save my Life. The want of a sufficient Authority in the Imposers of humane Tests and Creeds, must for ever silence them in the Case of Non-submission: But if the Thing imposed be not in it self sinful, and the Imposer has it in his Power to make it my Interest to submit, I am certainly at Liberty: For while the Thing in it self is considered as indifferent, any Benefit and Advantage on the one Side more than the other, will be sufficient to determine the Choice.

But after all, a great Question farther arises, whether it be lawful, upon any

Account, to subscribe humane Creeds and Tests of religious Orthodoxy in any *other Sense*, than that of the *Imposers*? Towards the clearing of which, it must be here considered, that the original *Imposers*, in such Cases, are always some Ecclesiastical Persons, who pretend to derive their Authority purely from Christ, and who first of all impose upon the Civil Magistrate, to establish their *own Doctrines*, or rather their *own Set of Words*, into a Law; and by that Means impose upon others to receive and subscribe them under certain *civil Penalties* and *legal Discouragements*. In the Business of Subscriptions to humane Tests and Standards of Orthodoxy, the Obligation, where there is any, must be *merely Civil*; and I defy all the *Ecclesiastical Imposers* in the World, to make it appear that there is, or can be, any *other Obligation* in the Case. Abstracting from this Force of the *Civil Law*, Ecclesiastical Impositions will be utterly insignificant and vain; and it must be always every Man's Duty and Interest to reject them with Contempt and Scorn. Now, from this Principle, which I shall venture to proceed upon 'till it is refuted, it must follow, that in the Case of Subscriptions to humane legal Tests of Orthodoxy, Men are not at all concerned with

with the Sense of the Ecclesiastical Imposers, or *Creed-makers*, (who, perhaps, had no Sense all,) but only with the Sense and Intention of the Government in the Civil Law. Now, 'tis certain, that the Magistrate *as such*, while he acts consistent with *himself*, and with the *Nature of his Office* (as he must always be supposed to do, 'till the contrary appears) can intend nothing in the *Civil Law* but the *publick Good*, or the Preservation of Civil Interest and Property; and therefore, he who subscribes any humane Test of Orthodoxy, in a Sense equally consistent with the publick Good, and the Civil Rights and Properties of his Fellow Subjects, equally answers the End and Intention of the Government in the Civil Law; and if he does not answer the End of Ecclesiastical Imposers, there can be no Harm in that, provided he does not hurt himself by subscribing any Thing that will not bear a Sense consistent with his Judgment and Conscience.

The Sense of Ecclesiastical Imposers in humane Tests of Orthodoxy, is often *impossible*, always *difficult* to come at; but their Intention, with respect to the Event or Consequence, is for the most part obvious enough; being only to engross the Wealth and Preferments of the

Church into their *own Hands*, by excluding all who will not list themselves into their *Party*; which being a wicked and *selfish Design*, ought certainly to be excluded by all *lawful Means*.

But you say, that upon this Principle, all the Obligation of Oaths, and all natural Justice in Promises and Contracts between Man and Man, may be eluded both in Words and Actions; which is so wild and groundless a Consequence, that I think you ought in *natural Justice* to review it again, and either to make good the Charge, or withdraw the Impeachment. You have a great deal more to do, Sir, before you can carry this Cause in any Court of Equity or Justice: You must prove, that our *Creed-makers* have an undoubted Authority from Christ, to enforce their *own Sense* of Scripture under the Penalty of *Excommunication*, whether that *Sense* be right or wrong, or at least, that they are not grossly mistaken in the Point of *Fundamentals*, and do not insist upon any Thing as Fundamental, which the Scripture has not made so: You must prove, that a humane Jurisdiction in Matters of mere Belief and Speculation is a Thing possible or practicable; you must shew, that 'tis a Thing in itself sinful to subscribe a humane Test in a *real Scripture Sense*,

*Sense*, if that Sense should happen to differ from the *Sense of the Imposers*; and that in all such Cases I am bound to tell the Imposers, that I do not believe or subscribe the Article in *their Sense*. You must prove, that Men are obliged in Reason and Conscience to accuse themselves before partial uncapable Judges, who take upon them to determine in Matters absolutely above their Cognizance and Jurisdiction, and who are ready to condemn their innocent Brethren for obeying God rather, than Man: And with Respect to the Articles now debated, you must make it appear, that they are capable of *any Sense at all*, in which an *Arian* may not as fairly subscribe them as an *Athanasian*. If you should write no more, till you can prove even this last, I should never expect to hear from you upon this Argument again: But the Truth is, you can prove nothing that should make out your severe uncharitable Consequences, and yet you write with as much Assurance as if you had Demonstration for all you say, or was dealing only in self-evident Propositions. Doctor *Waterland* thinks, that the Articles which were professedly intended as a Test against the *Arminians*, are capable only of an *Arminian Sense*; and what if it should be proved, that the

the Articles which are now urged as a Test against the *Arians*, are capable only of an *Arian Sense*, or at least as capable of an *Arian* as of any other *Sense*? This may be so for any Thing the Doctor has proved to the contrary, or I believe for any Thing that he can prove. 'Tis not all the Talk and Supposition of three personal *Hypostases* or *Substances* united in one *undivided Substance*; of three intelligent Agents, who are yet but one intelligent Agent; of two essentially distinct and infinitely different intelligent Beings, who are but one Person, *i. e.* one intelligent Agent: I say, 'tis not all this Darkness, Uncertainty, and Confusion of Sounds, that can ever serve to clear up either the Scriptures, or the Articles, or that can, in the least, justify the *Athanasians* more than any other Sort of Subscribers. One might undertake at any Time to make it appear, that *Tritheists*, *Arians*, and *Sabellians*, may all, or any of them, subscribe the first and second Articles of the Church of *England*, in as clear and consistent a Sense, as Doctor *Waterland* can in his System, which he calls *Orthodox* and *Catholick*.

All the learned Orthodox Writers have been ever driven to this *Acknowledgement*, that their own *Doctrine*, even in their  
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own *Words*, is *Incomprehensible*. They will not allow their *Unity* to be either numerical or specifick ; and could never agree among themselves, whether their *Trinity* be either *real* or *modal*, or *neither*, but something absolutely unintelligible between *both*. 'Tis true, they all endeavour to throw off this Darkness and Confusion upon the unknown *Manner of the Thing* ; and pretend that the *Thing itself* is clear and intelligible enough ; but whoever will not shut his *own Eyes*, must needs see, that 'tis the *very Thing itself* which thus confounds them, and that they can fix no determinate Meaning to their *own Words*. Whenever they talk of *Unity* and *Trinity* upon *Athanasian Principles*, they always take Care to admonish us, that *these Terms* are not to be understood in any literal numerical Sense ; but that they are figurative and allegorical, expressing something of which we have no proper Comparison, Analogy, or Resemblance, in the whole World besides. Thus then stands the Case : The *Expressions* are figurative, and the *Nature* of the *Figure* is such as cannot be express'd ; and why then may not the *Orthodox figurative*, be the *same* with their *Adversaries literal Sense*, notwithstanding the seeming Repugnancy of Sound. This can

can never be determin'd to the contrary, till the Expressions are brought out of the Allegory, or at least 'till the Nature of the Allegory itself be agreed upon, which I fear is never like to be done. The Orthodox Terms in this Case may therefore be expounded by, or compared to those Quantities, which the Mathematicians call imaginary or impossible; such as is the Root of a Negative Square; and which, tho' they stand for nothing in themselves, yet are sometimes of very good Use in the Business of *Equations*.

'Tis wonderful, methinks, when all Kind of *Heresy* is intelligible enough, that *Orthodoxy* should never be understood, but when it cannot be understood or literally express'd; 'tis still more wonderful that all Men should be obliged to subscribe it in any one particular determinate Sense. Whenever Doctor *Waterland* shall think fit to acquaint us, in what particular determinate Sense he himself subscribes the *two first* of the Thirty-nine Articles, I am persuaded, he will put his Adversaries out of all manner of Pain concerning either *these*, or any of the *rest*; and till he can explain his own *particular Sense*, he ought, I think, in Honour and common Justice, to drop the Business of Subscriptions. When it shall once appear, as I presume it

it some time or other must, that 'tis impossible and impracticable for the most honest and sincere Persons in the World, to subscribe the same humane *Tests* of Orthodoxy in the *same Sense*; perhaps, all Parties will then see and own, that *these Tests* are no ways preferable to the *Holy Scriptures*; and that the Cause of God and Religion may subsist as well without as with them.

You seem in great Pain, Sir, lest your Adversaries, by their Number, Weight, or Influence, should some time or other, get the Government on their Side, and procure their Doctrines to be *established by Law*. 'Tis somewhat *odd*, tho' nothing *New*, to observe how soon a little *Change of Circumstances* may oblige even Gentlemen of your Steadiness and Penetration, to *change Sides*. You have been hitherto with others, complaining as a *Dissenter* against legal exclusive Establishments, and pretending, that Christianity may very well subsist upon the Foot of the Gospel, without any *Civil Laws*, or Acts of Parliament, in Matters of *pure Religion and Conscience*: But now you are all on a sudden of another Mind, and would not as a *Dissenter* lose your *legal Establishment* for the whole World. Is this the Language of a learned Pro-

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testant Dissenter? Does the Force of his Argument, the Strength of his Cause lie here? I must tell you, Sir, that whatever yours may, my *Religion* needs no *legal Establishment*; and if under a *legal Toleration* only, it cannot subsist and support it self upon the sole Foundation of *Reason* and *Scripture*, I shall never repine to see it *fall to the Ground*. I can easily give up all those Advantages of what Nature or Kind soever, which can be secured only by a *legal Church Enclosure*, and am sorry to see you quitting your *Principles*, while you are defending your *Opinions*. 'Tis, for about Half a Sheet together, from Page 45,—52. that you found the Alarm of the infinite Danger that must ensue to your *Orthodox Faith*, should it once lose its *legal Establishment*. I am here intirely of your Opinion, Sir, and verily believe that your Fears and Apprehensions are well grounded: For if your Scheme of *Orthodoxy* be such as cannot keep its Footing with all the vast Advantages of Civil Law and Church Preferments, what would become of it should it ever chance to lose these necessary *Pillars of Truth*, and be left to subsist only upon the *Merits of the Cause*, and the bare Light and Strength of *Reason and Revelation*?

But

But that which must needs darken your Fears, and draw the Images of *Justice* under the most *dismal Shades* in your Imagination, is, lest your Adversaries gaining the Start, should turn the Tables upon you, and promote Truth in your own Way. And what, oh! what must be the Consequence! should Orthodoxy be once stript of her Infallibility, and be brought to the Tests of fallible Hereticks? What then would become of your main Argument, your only sufficient Test and Trial of real Christianity? But methinks I would fain abate your Fears, and administer a little Comfort. I hope better Things of your Adversaries, and that if they should ever have a proper Occasion they would give you for once a good Example of the Mildness, Humility, and Charity of the Gospel: An Example which was never yet given by any Orthodox Church in the World, where they could but engage the coercive Power of the Civil Magistrate in Favour of *true Religion*. 'Tis well known, that the first *Orthodox Council* were the first *Anti-Christian Tyrants* in the *Christian Church*; and that the mysterious infallible *Homoeans* first began the wholesome Christian Method of enlightening, and converting Men, by *Persecution* and *penal Laws*.

If the *Arians*, in their Turn, gave their Adversaries a Taste of this salutary Discipline, it was but what they might reasonably expect ; and how unjustifiable soever the Thing might be in it self, the Orthodox could have no just Cause of Complaint ; they the Orthodox had opened the Way for it, and taught their Adversaries the right Method of promoting *true Religion* ; and who could blame them for following the bright and brave Example of such glorious Leaders ?

The next Half Sheet, p. 52, — 59. is spent in a Charge of Insincerity against the *Authors of the New Scheme*. The main Ground of the Charge is this, that they will not tell you directly their whole Minds concerning the Points now in Debate ; which yet, you think, they are indispensably bound to declare when 'tis demanded of them. The Obligation here is doubtless as great and indispensable, as that which a Man lies under to answer directly and fully to a Robber, who should ask him how much Money he has about him, and demand it all. Suppose now, I should tell him in this Case but Part of the Truth, and so cheat him out of Part of my *own Right* ? Why then I should injure him just as much I do you, by not acquainting you with my whole Mind

Mind concerning the Trinity, or any other speculative Point, as often as you might be impertinent and bold enough to demand it of me. Your Instance relating to the Conduct of the primitive Christians professing and practising their Religion, while exposed to the Outrage of their Heathen Persecutors is nothing at all to the Purpose ; for it will not follow from hence, that I am obliged to make you my *Confessor*, concerning any Point of mere *Judgment* or *Belief*, in which you might think fit to demand Satisfaction. The Heathens brought *no Creeds*, *no Tests of Orthodoxy* against the Christians, as a *Scrutiny* upon *Conscience* and inward *Judgment* : They condemned them only for an outward Practice, contrary to their Laws. The Christians might have worshipped their own God in their own Way, provided they would but have comply'd with the Practice of their Country, and offered Sacrifices at the Heathen Altars too. *Creeds* and *Tests of Orthodoxy* contrived to rack Men's Consciences for their inward speculative Judgments and Opinions, while they cannot be charged with any wrong Practice, is a more refined Method of Conviction, left to the Discovery of Christian Persecutors, which the simple Heathens, who aimed at nothing

thing but what was possible and practicable, never thought of. When therefore, laying aside your *persecuting Tests* and *inquisitory Engines*, founded and employ'd upon a Supposition of Infallibility, you shall content your self to suspend your judicial Proces's against your Brethren, till upon your *own Principles* you can convict them of some thing criminal in Practice; you will then, and not 'till then, come up to the Rules and Measures of *Pagan Justice*.

Under this Head, you pretend to ridicule your Adversaries, for acknowledging that Christ is *God*, and yet denying him to be the one supreme *self-existent Being*; whereas your Orthodox Friends must assert the same Thing, if they would talk Sense, and be consistent with themselves; and they cannot decline it, but by saying, that the self same numerical individual *Being* is *begotten* and *unbegotten*, *originate* and *unoriginate*, *self-existent* and *not self-existent* at the same Time: But this is not the only Contradiction by a great many, that their cruel hard-hearted Orthodoxy puts them to the needless Expence of.

But nothing can be more surprizing than the Account you give here towards the close, concerning the Difficulties on both

both Sides in this Debate. The least, I think, that can be said of it is, that you have been hurried into this Controversy without *Thought* or *Consideration*, and before you had read *both Sides*: For supposing *otherwise*, I must declare, that I would not bear the *Shame* and *Reproach* of such *gross Abuses* and *Misrepresentations*, for all the *mere Orthodoxy* in the World. On your Side, it seems, there are no Difficulties; 'tis but to take every Thing you say for granted, and *to suppose* that what you contend for, is a Matter of *divine Revelation*, and the Business is done: But this you know is the very Thing in Question; which, therefore, you ought not to have begg'd: and 'tis certainly wholly unaccountable and inexcusable, that you say nothing to that very Point upon which any *fair Disputant* would have thought himself concerned to have spent his *main Strength*. As for the Difficulties you seem to enumerate on the *Arian Side*, I dare now trust them in the Hands of any *common Reader*, since every one must see that they are *mere Dreams* and *Fictions* of your own *Imagination*; tho', perhaps, you may by an arbitrary *Imposition of Names*, call them *Consequences*.

Your

I Your ranking the Doctrine of your Adversaries among those heretical, impious, and damnable Methods, which draw down divine Vengeance, and the Judgments of God upon a Nation, is suitable enough to that *Party Spirit, Zelotism, lurking Conceit of Infallibility* of which you have given but too plain Discoveries throughout this whole Book.

In fine, after you had spent the whole Strength and Force of your Elocution and Rhetorick, to animate and inspirit the learned Men among the Orthodox, to appear and make a Stand against a growing formidable Heresy, which by spreading still farther and farther like a mortal Contagion, threatens to lay all waste before it; you conclude with this remarkable Paragraph, p. 84. " How desirable is it in such Circumstances, that those Numbers of our Orthodox Clergy, who are Men of distinguished Learning, able in Disputation, and not incumbered with busy Life; and whose Duty it is to stand in the Gap, and oppose the Encroachments of a pernicious Heresy; would bestir themselves, and follow the Example of several excellent Writers? The learned Doctor Waterland, the judicious Earl of Nottingham, the acute Dr. Knight, who have

" have signaliz'd themselves in this Controversy, bravely defended the Orthodox Faith, and led in Triumph the Champions of the *Arian Philistines*, that defy'd the Armies of Christ the living God; besides many others, as well Dissenters as Church Men, who have engaged in this honourable Cause, fought a good Fight, and covered with Shame the boastful Adversary". Never, certainly, did any Hero before, thus mix his *Triumphs* with his *Fears*, and sing *te Deum for Victory*, while he is trembling under the Apprehensions of a *Defeat*. You summon up all the Powers of Heaven and Earth to fall upon a poor routed vanquished Enemy, whose Chiefs are all, either slain upon the Field of Battle, or taken Captives and made Prisoners of War. You cry aloud for Help and spare not; but when the drowsie Legions begin to awake, and are ready to receive your Commands, you tell them there is no Danger, they may sleep on and take their Rest, for the Work is all done already to their Hands: Dr. *Waterland*, the Earl of *Nottingham*, and a few others, have got the Honour of the Day; and their Adversaries are all dead in *Argument* and buried with *Shame*. But if it be indeed so, to what Purpose is all this Noife and

Outcry? Whence proceeds this Panick in the midst of all your Trophies? One would think you expected the *Resurrection* of the *Wicked* before that of the *Just*; or at least apprehended that these dead Men are still alive, arm'd in their full Strength, and capable of giving you as warm a Reception as ever. And indeed, after such a *Rout* as this, no Body wonders to find the *vanquished Enemy* safe and unhurt, without having received the slightest *Wound*, or lost one *Drop of Blood*. But when you come calmly to review this whole Matter, I hope you will think of some more proper Method of ending the War, and either renew the Debate in a Way of *fair Argument*, or sit down content with the *present Victory*.

If I have omitted any Thing material in your Argument, I should be glad to hear from you again as Occasion serves; for tho' I have very little spare Time to bestow upon this *Controversy*, yet I think that little cannot be better employ'd than by doing Justice to a Gentleman of your distinguishing Character and Merit in the learned World. I shall be always ready either to submit upon Conviction, or give you my farther Reasons why I cannot be convinced; and as to the Event,

vent, it does not at all concern me, whether I am to be better enlightened to receive your *Principles*, or more strengthened and confirmed in my *own*. I am, Sir, with Respect to all the Obligations of Justice, Peace, and Charity,

Marlborough,  
March 14.  
1721-2.

*Your most Obedient*

*humble Servant,*

T. M.





1800

